

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 198
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 6163

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, AR, CI
SUBJ: BEAGLE CHANNEL: CHILE SHIFTS POSITION IN PRESSING ARGENTINA;
PUBLICLY GOC DOWNPLAYS PROLONGED RECESS IN TALKS

REF: SANTIAGO 6122

1. CHILEAN FOREIGN MINISTER CUBILLOS TOLD AMBASSADOR
EVENING OF AUGUST 16 THAT HE HAD ORDERED THE RETURN OF
THE CHILEAN DELEGATION EARLIER THAT DAY. ACCORDING TO
CUBILLOS, THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE "SECOND ROUND", WHICH
HAD CONVENED IN B.A. AT CHIEF OF DELEGATION LEVEL AUGUST
14, APPEARED HEADED NOWHERE -- BOTH SIDES CONTINUED TALK-
ING AT CROSS PURPOSES. ON INSTRUCTIONS, GOC CHIEF
NEGOTIATOR ORREGO ASKED HIS ARGENTINE COUNTERPART ETCHE-
VERRY TO TABLE A PROPOSED DEMARCATION LINE FOR THE SOUTHERN
AREA. CUBILLOS SAID THAT THE ARGENTINE PROPOSAL INCLUDED
THE THREE CHANNEL ISLANDS AND OTHER CHILEAN ISLANDS
TO THE EAST OF THE MERIDIAN DOWN TO THE HORN.

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2. AFTER CONSULTATION WITH SANTIAGO, ORREGO WAS TOLD
TO BRING THE DELEGATION HOME. THE ARGENTINES APPEARED
FLUSTERED AND REPLIED THAT THEIR PROPOSAL WAS MERELY A
NEGOTIATING POSITION. THE CHILEANS RESPONDED THAT ONCE
THE ARGENTINES HAD A SERIOUS PROPOSAL THEY SHOULD TRANSMIT
IT TO SANTIAGO. THE RATHER BLAND JOINT COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWED.
CUBILLOS SAID THAT IF NO RESPONSE WAS FORTHCOMING THE GOC

WOULD TAKE ITS CASE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COURT (AS IT HAS THREATENED FROM THE BEGINNING).

3. MEANWHILE, GOC PUBLIC STATEMENTS DOWNPLAY THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE "PROLONGED RECESS" AND STRESS THAT THE GOC REMAINS READY TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS TO RESOLVE ISSUES CREATED BY THE ARBITRATION AWARD. EDITORIAL OPINION HAS ESSENTIALLY FOLLOWED THE SAME LINE WITH REGARD TO THE RECESSED TALKS BUT HAS DRAWN UPON THE JUST-RELEASED CORRESPONDENCE (REFTEL) BETWEEN THE ARBITRAL COURT AND THE UK GOVERNMENT TO RECONFIRM THE VALIDITY OF THE GOC CLAIMS IN THE AREA. CUBILLOS INSISTED THAT THE CORRESPONDENCE PLAYED NO PART IN THE GOC DECISION TO PRESS THE ARGENTINES.

4. COMMENT: THE GOC MOTIVATION IN PRESSING THE ARGENTINES AT THIS TIME IS NOT CLEAR. IT MAY BE NO MORE THAN CHILEAN FRUSTRATION WITH ARGENTINE UNWILLINGNESS TO ADDRESS THE BASIC ISSUE (SEE SANTIAGO 4899). ALTHOUGH MASSERA IS NOT YET OUT, THE GOC MAY HAVE CALCULATED THAT THE STRENGTHENED POSITION OF VIDELA AFTER AUGUST 1 WOULD PERMIT SERIOUS NEGOTIATION. A SECOND POSSIBILITY IS THAT THE CHILEANS REMAIN VERY DOUBTFUL THAT ANY SOLUTION OF THE BASIC ISSUE IS POSSIBLE AND, RATHER THAN LET MATTERS DRIFT, ARE LOOKING FOR AN EARLY EXCUSE TO RETURN TO THE INTERNATIONAL COURT. FINALLY, WE DO NOT RULE OUT
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THAT PRESIDENT PINOCHET WELCOMES A BIT MORE INTERNATIONAL TENSION AT THIS TIME IN ORDER TO SOLIDIFY SUPPORT WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES AND CITIZENRY AND TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM THE LETELIER CASE AND THE IMMINENT EXTRADITIONS REQUESTS.
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